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RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC
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RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 0266
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 6605
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 6679
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SUBJECT: SEOUL - PRESS BULLETIN; September 9, 2009

TOP HEADLINES

Chosun Ilbo, All TVs
Ssangyong Workers Vote to Quit the Korean
Confederation of Trade Union

JoongAng Ilbo, Hankook Ilbo, All TVs
ROKG Demands Apology from North Korea over Release of Water;
Investigates Whether It Was Intentional

Dong-a Ilbo
Actress Choi Gang-hee: "'Painful Tears of Glacier' Made me Decide
Not to Use Disposable Cups"

Hankyoreh Shinmun
The Ruling Party Sets Out to Roll Back Sejong City Plan

Segye Ilbo
ROKG Suggests Possibility that North Korean Military May Be Involved
in Dam Discharge

Seoul Shinmun
ROK and U.S. Intelligence Authorities: "There Is No Sign of Crack in
North Korea's Hwang River and Upstream Dams"

DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS

The ROK's Unification Ministry said yesterday that it found unacceptable the North's explanation that it had released water from one of its dams on Sunday on the Imjin River because water levels on its side of the border have surged. Unification Ministry Spokesman Chun Hae-sung said in a statement, "The ROKG demands an apology and sufficient explanation from North Korea for causing South Korean deaths." (All, All TVs)

ROK health authorities confirmed yesterday that the A (H1N1) virus was the direct cause of the brain death of a woman who was infected with the new flue. (All, All TVs)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

At a September 7 press conference, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad affirmed Iran's right to pursue a nuclear program, saying that the country will not negotiate its "nuclear right."
(Chosun, Hankook)

MEDIA ANALYSIS

-N. Korea developments

All ROK media gave prominent attention to the ROK's Unification Ministry's September 8 statement saying that the ROKG found unacceptable the North's explanation that it had released water from one of its dams on Sunday on the Imjin River because water levels on its side of the border have surged. The ROK media quoted Unification Ministry Spokesman Chun Hae-sung as saying, "The ROKG demands an apology and sufficient explanation from North Korea for causing South Korean deaths." Moderate Seoul Shinmun reported in its front-page story that ROK and U.S. intelligence authorities found no sign of a crack in North Korea's Hwang River and upstream dams and that therefore some observers are raising a possibility that North Korea deliberately unleashed water from its dam.

Right-of-center JoongAng Ilbo editorialized: "Expectations have run high that inter-Korean relations will improve due to the North's

SEOUL 00001442 002 OF 003

recent conciliatory moves. However, this incident (of North Korea's dam discharge) put a damper on this positive atmosphere... If North Korea genuinely wants to warm relations with the ROK, it should realize the need to calm down the ROK's anger first over the release of water from its dam."

- Afghanistan - reports of election fraud,

airstrike incident fallout

Moderate Hankook Ilbo reported that according to the Associated Press, incumbent President Hamid Karzai has passed the crucial 50% threshold in Afghanistan's presidential election with almost all the votes counted, but a partial recount has been ordered after observers found "clear and convincing evidence of fraud" at a number of polling stations.

In addition, left-leaning Hankyoreh Shinmun and Hankook Ilbo observed in its inside-page story that the German government is in a quandary over NATO's September 4 attack on Taliban militants in Kunduz province, Afghanistan, in which it is believed that civilians lost their lives. Germany is at odds with the U.S. over who is responsible for the fatal attack. Hankook Ilbo cited the British Financial Times as reporting on September 8 that this incident may put German Chancellor Angela Merkel's reelection at risk.

- Convictions of UK airline bomb plotters

Conservative Chosun Ilbo and Seoul Shinmun carried reports on the conviction of three British men for plotting to blow up transatlantic airliners in 2006. The media noted that the plot, if realized, would have threatened to surpass the September 11 attacks in 2001 in terms of the number of potential victims.

OPINIONS/EDITORIALS

WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO PUT PRESSURE ON PYONGYANG TO MAKE PROGRESS ON NORTH KOREA NUCLEAR ISSUE
(JoongAng Ilbo, September 9, 2009, Page 45; Excerpts)

Recently, a prevalent view among some experts is that as long as

North Korean leader Kim Jong-il is in charge, it is difficult to resolve the nuclear issue. This pessimistic view is based on the "naove" expectation that since Kim is not in good health, the North Korean regime will soon change, and then, after that, the nuclear issue will be resolved. This thought is highly likely to result in a policy of "neglecting" the North Korean nuclear issue. This policy suggests that since we cannot anticipate the resolution of the nuclear issue at the moment, we might as well wait until the Kim Jong-il regime collapses.

There are three ways of dealing with the North Korean nuclear issue. The first one is a "benign neglect" strategy. However, if we declare that the Six-Party Talks are over and discontinue diplomatic efforts, North Korea will likely take advantage of the current situation. If Pyongyang resumes its nuclear programs and enlarges its nuclear arsenal, it will be very difficult to control the situation. The second one is a "malign neglect" strategy. This involves a regime change in the North through economic or financial sanctions but, to this end, we should tackle uncertainties in the North and persuade China to accept U.S.- and ROK-led unification of the Korean Peninsula. The third one is a pressure tactic. This tactic is to put pressure on the North, but only in order to bring the North back to the Six-Party Talks for progress on the nuclear issue.

In the end, the only realistic option we can choose is the third one. By imposing sanctions against Pyongyang under UN Security Council Resolution 1874, we pose a threat to North Korea's "regime security" and urge the communist state to return to the Six-Party

SEOUL 00001442 003 OF 003

Talks. After recently feeling the effects of UNSC 1874, North Korea seems to have launched a charm offensive on the U.S. and the ROK. This change of attitude (on the part of North Korea) is largely attributed to China, which joined in the pressure on the North.

The reason why the North insists on bilateral talks with the U.S. is to break up a "pressure front" formed by China, the U.S., Japan, Russia, and the ROK by improving relations with the U.S. China, the biggest beneficiary of the Six-Party Talks, agrees (to this assessment). U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Policy Stephen Bosworth, who recently visited Seoul, also said, "I don't think there's been any fundamental change (in the North.) We're prepared to engage bilaterally as well with the North Koreans, but only in the context of the Six-Party process and in order to facilitate the Six-Party exercise." The determination of Japan and Russia toward the denuclearization of North Korea is also strong. The ultimate resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue is to draw North Korea into a "new world" by continuing pressure on the North based on close cooperation among the five nations and the international community.

TOKOLA